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Museum of Florida History, Tallahassee

Fort Moultrie National Monument

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Patriot and Warrior

A Painting by Christopher M. Still

Oil on Linen, 126" by 48"

The proud, fierce Seminole warrior, Osceola, looks you straight in the eye. One hand points toward a ship meant to remove Indians to a reservation in the west—the other grips a knife, planted with determination into a symbolic U.S. document. Faces in the trunk of a palm tree evoke the spirits of three chiefs—one for each war fought against them. These and other symbols recall the struggles of Florida's Seminole Indian people before and during its Territorial Period (1821-1845).

The name "Seminole" translates to "free people" and evolved from the Spanish word, "cimmarones", which means "wild" or "untamed". It is an appropriate name for this amalgamation of people who shared a common desire to be free of domination.

The Seminoles were made up of the ancestors of Florida tribes, combined with Indians from the southeastern "Creek" nation who emigrated into Spanish-owned Florida—in many cases fleeing from encroaching white settlers and the U.S. troops protecting them. Runaway African slaves joined and intermingled with the Indians, infuriating southern plantation and slave owners.

Spain's weakness in protecting her Florida residents became clear in what became known as the First Seminole War. In 1818, General Andrew Jackson led a "punitive" expedition into Florida, burning rebellious Indian villages. He brazenly captured Spanish forts as well, which helped lead to the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 that would make Florida a U.S. territory.

In 1823, the Treaty of Moultrie Creek set apart four million acres of land south of Ocala as Indian Territory, and the Seminoles were relocated to make way for more U.S. settlers. Conflict remained between the two groups. The Second Seminole War erupted in 1835, after many bands refused to agree to a treaty relocating them yet again, this time to present-day Oklahoma. The warrior Osceola led the Indian uprising, beginning the longest, most costly Indian war in U.S. history.

Fighting ceased in 1842, and the few hundred Seminoles that remained managed to live in relative peace for 14 years. In 1855, a third and final attempt to relocate the remaining Seminoles was marked by a series of skirmishes led by Chief Billy Bowlegs—the Third Seminole War. When the U.S. withdrew in 1858, still with no treaty, the small number of remaining Seminoles—"the most defiant members of a famously defiant tribe"—took refuge in the swamps of the Everglades.

The painting shows the six coin-like Florida State Seals, including the current one, which features a Seminole woman. There is no county in the state that isn't marked by the footprints of the courageous Seminoles, who fought against overwhelming odds to remain here. They, and their culture, are now valued as one of the state's greatest treasures.

Patriot and Warrior

CHRISTOPHER M. STILL

The figure of Osceola points towards a ship as does a figure in the first mural *"In Ages Past"*. The faces of Seminole chiefs can be seen in the trunk of the palm tree, a symbol of their lasting spirit.

References such as a plaster cast of Osceola made after his death, and an oil painting by George Catlin, were used by the artist, along with a living model, to create this depiction of the legendary Seminole warrior.

1) ***Osceola***. Born to an Upper Creek Indian mother in around 1804, Osceola came with his mother to North Florida. He relocated to Central Florida under the terms of the *Treaty of Moultrie Creek* (1823). When the U.S. government wrote a new treaty that attempted to relocate the Seminoles once again, this time to a reservation in present day Oklahoma, Osceola became a leader to those who resisted leaving Florida at the start of the Second Seminole War (1835-42).

A popular, but unsubstantiated, story says that he defiantly drove his knife into the treaty in the place of his signature. He was reportedly responsible for the murder of Indian Agent Wiley Thompson, as well as a co-conspirator in the Dade Massacre in 1835—incidents that started the war—and he earned a reputation for ruthless daring in many successful guerrilla-type attacks on Federal troops.

Osceola was captured in 1837 in St. Augustine, tricked by a white flag of truce. He spent his final days imprisoned in South Carolina, where he posed for several artists, including George Catlin. Osceola died of disease in 1838. Although his fame was such that his death was noted on front pages around the world, his request to be buried in Florida was ignored. In fact, after death, he was decapitated, his head embalmed and given to a New York medical collection—later presumed destroyed in a fire. His headless body remains in a grave at Fort Moultrie, South Carolina, despite attempts to return it to Florida.

Following the burial of Osceola, an anonymous donor placed a stone on his grave that reads "Oceola,[*sic*] Patriot and Warrior"—inspiring the title of the painting.

2) ***Gorget***. These decorative silver breastplates were often traded to the Indians. Close observation will reveal the engraved name, *"Osceola"*, and a drawing of a wild boar on the top of the gorget. A similar gorget appears in the portrait of Osceola painted by Catlin.

The gorget in this painting is from a collection of the National Scottish Museum. Osceola was also called Billy Powell, after his father, who was said to have been of Scottish descent and married into the Indian tribe. Osceola later received his lasting Indian name—*Asi-Yaholo*. *Asi* referred to the ceremonial Black Drink brewed from yaupon leaves and often used before going to war. *Yaholo* means "one who sings out".

3) ***Ostrich Plumes.*** Osceola was known to carry ostrich plumes to wear in his turban.

4) ***Osceola's Clothing.*** When posing for his final painting, Osceola was dressed in these garments, which vary from those typically worn by an Indian warrior.

5) ***Hand and Knife.*** The legend persists that Osceola drove a knife into the "*Treaty of Paynes Landing*" resolving never to give up Florida. Historians believe the tale may have its roots in an instance where Osceola was kept out of the talks going on with Chief Micanopy. Frustrated that the chief's interpreter was not present, and that he, himself, was locked out of the proceedings, he wildly flourished his knife. In this painting, he plants his knife into a land grant that actually did not exist until seven years after his death. This is a symbol of his eternal spirit of resistance and his love of his home.

6) ***Flag of Truce.*** On October 27, 1837, Osceola was captured under a flag of truce and imprisoned in the fortress of the Castillo San Marcos at St. Augustine (at the time called Ft. Marion). The droplets of blood on this flag symbolize the U.S. soldiers killed by Osceola and his band, which led to the use of this trickery to capture him.

7) ***Musket.*** This firearm was one of several types issued to troops fighting in the Seminole wars.

8) ***Land Grant***. Desire for land was a large factor in the attempts to remove the Seminoles from Florida, and also motivated the territory's press for statehood. The Federal government would officially parcel out land to help settle a new state and protect it from foreign interests. Developers were eager to build new railroad projects and plantations in Florida.

9) ***Statehood.*** This document is the act by the 28th Congress on December 2, 1844 to admit Florida as the twenty-seventh state of the Union, along with Iowa as the twenty-eighth. The two were passed together in order to keep a congressional balance between slave states and free states.

10) ***Abraham.*** Abraham was Chief Micanopy's personal advisor and interpreter, and was also considered his "slave". Escaped slaves who joined the Seminoles were generally required to contribute in return for their asylum, but were accepted by the tribe and often married other Seminoles.

Abraham was likely a member of the war party leading Dade's Massacre. He also negotiated terms of Indian removal to the west, fighting to ensure that the "Black Seminoles" be relocated along with the Indians rather than returned to slavery.

11) ***Transport Ship.*** The ship at the mouth of Tampa Bay waits to transport Seminoles out of Florida and to the reservation in the west. Canoes can be seen alongside. This scene is based on an historic engraving captioned "*The Sorrow of the Seminoles*".

12) ***The face of Neamathla***. In 1817, Federal troops led by Colonel Gaines attacked and burned Neamathla's village after the chief warned them not to cross the Flint River onto their land. The Indians retaliated by ambushing a boat of soldiers and civilians, killing most aboard. The Secretary of War sent General Andrew Jackson into the region, which still belonged to Spain, to fight the rebellious Seminoles during the period known as the First Seminole War.

13) ***The Face of Micanopy.*** Micanopy was a prominent Seminole chief during the Second Seminole War. He led the raid of Dade's Massacre, and fought against Indian removal to the west until the pressure of Federal troops, disease and starvation overwhelmed and depleted his band of warriors.

14) ***The Face of Billy Bowlegs.*** Following the Second Seminole War, sporadic conflicts continued. In 1855, a U.S. Army survey party provoked an attack by Seminoles led by Chief Billy Bowlegs, starting what became known as the Third Seminole War to the United States. The U.S. government once again attempted to remove all the Indians, using not only force, but also bounty hunters and bribery. Chief Bowlegs, starving and beaten, finally surrendered in 1858 after the capture of his granddaughter. Thirty-eight warriors and 85 women and children left with him on a steamer called the "*Grey Cloud*" from Egmont Key, headed for the western Indian territory.

15) ***Seminoles in Dugout Canoe.*** The Seminole culture survived through the three wars. The remaining Indians fled southward into the Everglades, hiding and surviving in its impenetrable swamps with the alligators, panthers and mosquitoes.

16) ***Map of the Everglades.*** Throughout the murals, maps of Florida appear. In this painting the map is reduced to only the region of the Everglades, a symbol of what was left of the Seminoles' Florida homeland.

17) ***Empty Dugout Canoe.*** This canoe may have drifted ashore after its owner boarded the ship for the western reservation. It is reminiscent of the canoe found in the first mural "*In Ages Past*" and symbolizes a culture that has all but disappeared.

18) ***The State Seals.*** These six seals depict the evolution of the imagery used from the Territorial Period to the present. The basic design elements were established by the Florida Legislature in 1868, when a new Constitution directed that "the Legislature shall, at first session, adopt a seal for the state, and such seal shall be the size of an American silver dollar."

The sun's rays, a steamboat, and an Indian woman scattering flowers remain on the seal today, along with the wording "Great Seal of the State of Florida: In God We Trust". In 1985 the Indian woman was accurately depicted in Seminole clothing.